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DE RUEHJI #0174 1401533  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 201533Z MAY 09  
FM AMCONSUL JEDDAH  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1323  
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 8344  
RUEHDH/AMCONSUL DHAHRAN PRIORITY 0041  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 0306  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0389  
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0138  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 4528  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 2729

UNCLAS JEDDAH 000174

SIPDIS

FOR NEA/ARP, CA, DS/IP/NEA, OES; PLEASE PASS TO US  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: EARTHQUAKE ACTIVITY IN WESTERN SAUDI ARABIA:  
CURRENT SITUATION OUTSIDE AFFECTED AREAS NORMAL

1. (U) SUMMARY. For the past several days, but especially today in newspaper headlines, local media have reported aftershocks and tremors in northwestern Saudi Arabia in the area near the village of Al Ais, 200 km northwest of Medina. Medina and Yanbu are about 400 km north of the major Red Sea city of Jeddah, approximately four hours away by road. Tremors ranging from 3.0 to 5.9 on the Richter scale have been measured. An American engineer in Yanbu reports no signs of damage at or disruption to the large Yanbu Industrial Complex and petrochemical facilities. No tremors have been felt in the area of Jeddah or Mecca and the situation in most of the Western Region of Saudi Arabia is completely normal. No injuries or deaths have been reported. Post has been in contact with wardens in Yanbu and Medina.  
END SUMMARY.

2. (U) Earthquakes ranging from 3.0 to 5.9 in magnitude on the Richter scale are reported to have taken place in northwestern Saudi Arabia in recent days, leading to the evacuation of villages around the Al-Ais volcano (dormant but perhaps awakening, last said to have erupted 620 years ago). Al Ais is a village located 200 km northwest of Medina. Local blogs are speculating that the quakes may be precursors to volcanic activity. As many as 60,000 people are reported to have been affected by the seismic activity, many reported to be sheltering with friends and family or in apartments and temporary housing provided by Saudi authorities. Civil Defense authorities have ordered families in the Al Ais area to relocate to hotels, paying each family SAR 7,350 (USD approx 2,000). A Saudi Geological Survey Team is reported to have detected a large crack in the earth at Harrah Al Sharqah and opened a quake detection station on the site.

3. (U) According to a Ministry of Interior colonel, Saudi Civil Defense authorities have warned residents of Al-Ais and surrounding villages to avoid areas where smoke is seen to be coming out of the ground since "such areas are more likely to see volcanic eruptions," with "rumblings and pungent smells" also said to be indications of possible eruptions.

4. (U) In a still unconfirmed report, roads in the city of Medina are said to be currently choked with people leaving for open areas and gardens. There have also been reports of people fainting. Medina Governor Prince Abdul Aziz bin Majed is reported to have ordered officials to do everything necessary to ensure the safety and well being of residents. Residents of affected areas have been urged to seek shelter in Medina or Yanbu.

5. (U) COMMENT: Situation is normal in Jeddah and surrounding

areas and also in Yanbu, but post will continue to monitor and report developments. Senior MFA contact confirms that there have been no injuries or deaths in the area of the quakes and that aside from the Al-Ais region, the situation elsewhere in the Western Region of Saudi Arabia is normal.  
END COMMENT.

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